

# Getting Down to Details

Page 1



**Mark Rios (right)  
with Administrator  
Blakey, Chief  
of Staff David  
Mandell and some  
jungle friends on  
the Amazon.**

In Mark Rios' and Archie Archilla's world, the days start early, end late, and provide a lot of personal satisfaction. As FAA senior representatives South America and Panama, they were responsible for not only keeping Administrator Marion Blakey up to speed on the aviation interests of an entire region during her recent trips to Brazil and Chile, but also for their day-to-day job of carrying on the agency's work of promoting aviation safety and efficiency there.

The administrator traveled to Brazil and Chile to address the 9th biennial meeting of Latin America's civil aviation authorities, where she discussed cooperation, technology and international financing issues.

# Getting Down to Details

Page 2

She also visited SIVAM, the sophisticated Brazilian Amazon surveillance system that combines ground-based and airborne radar, weather satellites and environmental sensors to prevent drug trafficking, illegal mining, farming and logging; as well as full radar coverage of a region that is two-third's the size of the United States.

Because of the logistical complexity of these visits, combined with numerous meetings and receptions, the work on this trip didn't just begin when the administrator's plane touched down. Rios, a 25-year veteran of the FAA, visited Brazil a month early to plan when, where, and with whom the administrator would be at any given minute. As an advocate for aviation safety and efficiency for the region, he worked through every possible press issue and transportation problem they could be raised.

"We get into a lot of the detail," he said.

He also had to figure out the protocol for every situation the administrator might encounter. Do you greet with a handshake or a kiss on the cheek? Do you open the gift right away or wait? "We want to make sure we understand the culture," he said.

During a high-level meeting, the entire translating system broke down. Rios immediately took to the stage, leaned into the admin-



**Rios (left) and Archilla served as advance men for the administrator's trip to South America.**

# Getting Down to Details

Page 3

istrator and translated for her until the equipment could be fixed more than an hour later. It is these small moments that make Rios's job stressful, but also rewarding. His goal, as he put it, is to have "no surprises."

On the next leg of the trip in Chile, Archilla, director of the FAA's Latin American and Caribbean Office based in Miami, also had a full plate.

Between the meetings and receptions, there were long days that usually started around 6 a.m. and ended about midnight. The early starts might have posed an extra obstacle for Archilla. "[The administrator] isn't much of a morning person and when she was told that she had to wake up at 4 a.m. the next day, she said she might have to kill someone," Archilla said jokingly. "But she's a real trooper."

Rios and Archilla were quick to point out they couldn't do their job without support from their team in Miami and Washington, D.C. Using knowledge sharing technology, numerous people are able to coordinate the administrator's schedules and papers for all of her trips. Rios mentions his working relationship with LeAnn Heart as one of the best example of teamwork he has ever experienced. ➔



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